EVALUATING EMPLOYEE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS FOR THE REEDY CREEK

EMERGENCY SERVICE

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Reedy Creek Emergency Service (RCES) has no formal process in place for evaluating employee performance for the rank of Lieutenant, Engineer or Firefighter. In addition to this problem, there is no formal process in place which would channel the employee's interest into a career path supported by the organization.

The problem identified for this research project was what type of employee appraisal system would best suit the needs of RCES and its employees?

The purpose of this applied research project is to review, compare, and evaluate employee appraisal systems used in the public and private sector with the intent of making a recommendation to design and develop an employee appraisal system for use at RCES.

This applied research project utilized an action and evaluative research methodology. The research questions to be answered are:

1. What types of performance appraisal systems are being utilized within the Emergency Service Industry?

2. How effective are these performance appraisal systems in evaluating and motivating the employee?

3. What key elements are required for an employee appraisal system to be effective?

4. What type of employee appraisal system should be used to evaluate, motivate and develop the employees of RCES?

The principal procedure used to conduct this research project included an extensive literature review of information from both public and private sectors

concerning employee appraisals. Other emergency service agencies within the Central Florida area were contacted for copies of their procedures used to conduct their employee appraisal systems.

The results of the research indicated that employee appraisal systems are a necessary tool for management to properly evaluate an employee's growth and performance. There are several types of employee evaluation programs on the market being used within the emergency service industry. The research has shown that many agencies have designed an employee performance appraisal system that is unique to their particular department, yet it still has the same basic elements throughout as others. The research also indicated that an effective employee appraisal system is an ongoing process that requires constant communication between the appraiser and the employee throughout the appraisal period. The performance appraisal is fundamentally a feedback process. Research indicated that at least five key requirements are needed to create an effective performance appraisal system. These key requirements are: relevancy, effectiveness, reliability, acceptability and practicality. The results of the research indicates that RCES and its employees could benefit greatly by designing and properly implementing an employee appraisal system.

The recommendations of this applied research project include, (a) RCES design and implement an employee appraisal system that would be of benefit to the organization as a whole as well as to the employee. (b) The system design should be user friendly, effective and should not be time consuming or cumbersome. (c) It is recommended that the employee's play a major role in the design and development of the employee appraisal system.   Employees and management should work together to

set attainable goals and set level of standards to be met. The key requirements to be included are: relevancy, effectiveness, reliability, acceptability and practicality. (d) Training is the cornerstone to an effective employee appraisal system. Training is to be provided to all personnel so that the purpose and method of the new system is fully understood. (e) An established periodic review should be conducted to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the new RCES employee appraisal system.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem facing Reedy Creek Emergency Services (RCES) is that it is presently functioning without any type of employee appraisal system in place for the shift personnel. The lack of such a system has greatly hampered management's ability to properly evaluate the employees' performance and needs. With the lack of feedback from an employee evaluation system, the employees and managers are falling short of meeting the departmental goals and objectives. Therefore, the above average employees are getting no positive reinforcement, and below average employees continue to be substandard. Within the RCES system, this lack of proper feedback has encouraged some good employees to fall short of their abilities because they see no need to maintain their positive presence; thus they join the substandard employee rank. This creates dissatisfaction across the department and reduces the entire organization's performance. The problem identified for this research project was what type of employee appraisal system would best suit the needs of the RCES and its employees?

Managers are finding that new employees that are entering the emergency service field are higher educated and more demanding. These employees want to be able to see the "Big Picture" and know and understand their place within this picture. Today's managers are finding that they have to be more creative in maintaining these employees if they wish to keep them. All employees have specific needs. One of the most important employee needs is feedback. The purpose of the Employee Appraisal System is to give feedback to the employee as well as the employer. This feedback is the driving force that gives the employee and employer the ability to understand each other's needs and desires and design a plan to grow together.

The purpose of this research project is to review, compare, and evaluate current employee appraisal systems being utilized in the public and private sector.   This information would then be used to recommend to RCES senior staff the type of employee appraisal system that should be used and what necessary components should be included.

This applied research project utilized an action and evaluative research methodology. The research questions to be answered are:

1. What types of performance appraisal systems are being utilized within the Emergency Service Industry?

2. How effective are these performance appraisal systems in evaluating and motivating the employee?

3. What key elements are required for an employee appraisal system to be effective?

4. What type of employee appraisal system should be used to evaluate, motivate and develop the employees of RCES?

BACKGROUND and SIGNIFICANCE

Reedy Creek Emergency Services (RCES) is a division of the Reedy Creek Improvement District (RCID) located in Central Florida. RCID is a special tax district created by Florida legislation in 1967 to handle governmental issues dealing with the land development and growth of a specified geographical area. Walt Disney World Company (WDW) owns a majority of the area covered by RCID. WDW is RCID's major taxpayer, accounting for approximately 85% of the tax revenue brought into the special tax district.

In the mid 1980's, RCES attempted to implement an employee appraisal system. The attempt failed over the next four years and was eventually discontinued in 1988. By the end of 1988, the employees knew that the old employee evaluation process had little or no value. The shift employees developed deep concerns for the validity of the system. There was a deep distrust for all of management who conducted the evaluations. There were three major reasons that the 1980's evaluation system failed. 1.) There was minimal training of the employee and the evaluator on what the expectations were from the appraisal system. 2.) The employee had no input in the design and development of the appraisal system, thus there was no "buy in" from the employee. 3.) No incentives were in place for the employee to try to meet any perceived expectations. The current labor agreement did not allow for any pay incentive to be tied to an employee appraisal system. Since 1988, there has been no employee appraisal system in place until the managerial system was placed in service in 1996.

In 1996, the RCES Personnel Services Division purchased an employee appraisal system called "Knowledge Point". The Knowledge Point system is a computer-based system that allows the evaluator to customize the employee appraisal system to meet numerous job classifications. RCES is presently only using this system for evaluating its managerial staff.

The National Fire Academy (NFA), *Executive Development Course* states in the Following and Leading segment that, "managers should cultivate the qualities that promote effective *followership* in their organization". In order for the employee to follow management's lead, the employee needs to have a full understanding as to where the organization is heading and how the employee is involved. The Executive Development Course also relates to the importance of feedback to both the employee as well as the organization's management team. It is this process of feedback where management should clearly explain expectations placed on the employee. Management should understand that the employee has expectations of management as well. Employees need guidance and direction as well as role models and mentors if they are expected to be followers. If management expects the employee to follow their lead then management must show the employee the way. One of the most important roles that management must play is the role of "change agent". The "change agents" of the organization encourage others to embrace change and be proactive in creating a more effective work environment (NFA, Executive Development, p.SM5-15 1998).

Employee appraisal systems are not new. Emergency organizations across the nation have been trying to find the right employee appraisal system for their department for years. Some have been successful and some have failed miserably. RCES is one

of the departments that have failed thus far. The author of this research project intends to be the change agent and assist in the design and development of an employee appraisal system that meets both the needs of the employee and the organization.

Accountability is the key word for the late 90's. Managers are finding that they are being held accountable for more duties. Therefor, managers need to hold everyone in the organization accountable to do their job. Thus, the employee evaluation system is a key element in organizational accountability. Because it encourages feedback both upwards and downwards thus creating a more educated and motivated organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review was to determine what types of employee appraisal systems have been developed and if the systems are meeting the needs of the employee and organization. Based on the literature review it was clear that no organization had a system that rated perfect and could not be improved. The literature review did disclose that there are a number of different employee evaluation systems available from which an organization may select. Organizations should be aware that there are several pitfalls to be aware of prior to selecting the employee evaluation system for their organization.

Any company that is going to make it in the 1990's and beyond must find a way to engage the mind of every single employee. If you're not, thinking all the time about making every person more valuable, you don't have a chance. What's the alternative?

Wasted minds? Uninvolved people? A labor force that's angry or bored? That doesn't

make sense (Welch, 1998).

More than 80 percent of surveyed government organizations still use outdated

performance evaluation processes that are insufficient to motivate, encourage, or

recognize employees (Luthy, 1998).

Demands are being placed on emergency managers across the nation to do

more with less. The term "quicker, better and cheaper" has become a constant

reminder that managers must always be on the lookout for ways to be more effective at

what their organization can deliver.

Now more than ever, local government executives are hard pressed to justify any

increase in expenditures unless it can be attributed directly to improved or expanded

service delivery in the community (Walter, 1998).

Thirty years ago, the work of Fredrick Hertzberg and others demonstrated that

money alone does not motivate employee performance; nor does it reinforce loyalty or

devotion to various organizational initiatives. Rather it is a "satisfier" that enables an

employee to satisfy personal and family needs and, to some degree, to reflect his or her

status in the work place. Even with information provided by these early studies and by

many studies since, public organizations have floundered among simplistic approaches

to employee performance evaluation and correspondingly weak attempts to link

performance to pay (Luthy, 1998).

Organizations that have produced effective performance management systems

provide the tools to measure what really matters and to foster open communication

among employees about what counts. Performance management defined as the

cyclical, year round process which managers and employees work together on setting expectations, coaching and feedback, review results and rewarding performance has a significant impact on organizational success (Campbell, 1996).

Various emergency service organizations throughout Central Florida were contacted to request copies of their employee appraisal process. Most agencies contacted openly admitted that their employee appraisal process needed improvement. Several agencies were in the process of re-evaluating their own employee evaluation system to make improvements. There was a commonality of comments made from each organization contacted concerning the evaluation process. All agencies felt that the evaluations were a very important part of the employee development process. Though the process is time consuming, all agencies felt that the process needed to be formalized so that employee performance could be tracked and rewarded where needed.

The process of employee performance evaluation has assumed an expanded meaning over the past decade. No longer can it be merely an annual exercise to justify compensation decisions. It is a critical management tool that must become one of the central initiatives within every public agency (Luthy, 1998).

In the article Strategies for Success in Measuring Performance , Campbell, Garfinkel wrote that there are five main reasons that performance evaluation programs fail.

1.   *Focusing on the wrong things*. The evaluation must be job specific. The employee needs to understand the relationship between the evaluation and their job. The evaluation must make expectations clear. Focus must be placed on the things that

are most important to both the employee and management. Only then will the employee fully understand what is important and what is expected to be accomplished.

2.   *Ignoring senior management, managers and employees during the design phase.*   By ignoring management and employees during the design phase, management and employee "buy-in" is compromised. This "buy-in" is a must be from the most senior manager down to the newest employee.   When senior management, managers and employees all have input into the design of the process, they each place their "finger prints" on the process thus they gain ownership of the process and want it to be successful.

3.   *Failing to communicate information about the process and changes in it.* Communication is key to the success of the process. Along with communication is training. Training must be conducted with senior management, managers, and employees so that everyone knows how the process is designed to work and what the expected results should be. Anytime changes are to be made to the process, a new training initiative must be undertaken to cover the changes.

4.   *Making the process difficult*. The process must be changed from being complex to simple. Most managers indicate that they dread performance evaluations because they are cumbersome and time consuming. Some organizations are streamlining the process by focusing on a few key commitments and critical capabilities that really make a difference in the employee's performance.

5.   *Implementing "flavor of the month", programs that people don't believe will last.* Many organizations waste valuable employee time by changing programs without properly evaluating and developing the programs from the start.   The employees are

quick to pick up on this and soon do not feel that they should invest their time in something that won't be here tomorrow (Campbell, 1996).

The literature review found that there are two basic types of employee evaluation rating systems presently being used.

Management by Objectives (MBO) MBO focuses more on task than it does on the behavior of the subordinate. It relies on goal setting for the organization as a whole, each department, and each manager, within the department, and each employee. It does not measure employee behavior, but does measure each employee's contribution to the organization (Wood, 7).

Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) BARS is a variation of simple rating scales which clearly state the objectives to be rated in behavioral terms and uses critical incidents to explain various levels of performance. A rating form used to score the performance, lists a series of statements that describe the job-related behavior. The evaluator simply checks off the appropriate statement that most fits the behavior performance. Most statements begin with the response categories, such as; always, very often, fairly often, occasionally, and never. Critical incidents are brief narratives by the supervisor of the things an employee has accomplished as part of his/her job performance. A diary is required with this process. The focus is on the behavior and not the traits of the employee (Wood, 7).

This literature review found the BARS method to be the most commonly used system within the Emergency Service Industry. Chief Sam Jackson of Osceola County Fire Rescue (OCFR) states that they have found that the BARS system works best for them. OCFR designed their own job specific evaluation check off form that includes the

County's general categories, the OCFR department categories and then a job specific category (APPENDIX A). The employees annual merit pay increase is tied to the final score on the evaluation. Jackson states that there is still some bias in the evaluation process. Some managers tend to try to give all employees as high of score as possible so that the employee can get a larger raise. Other managers tend to be more reserved and demanding on how they score each employee. Chief Jackson states that it is possible with their present system to have two identical employees being evaluated by different managers and both be making considerable different money five years down the road. Jackson states that this is the problem when money is tied to the evaluation process.

Chief Lee Agnew of the Kissimmee Fire Department (KFD) states that they too use a BARS type of process (APPENDIX A). KFD uses an employee performance appraisal from that is used throughout the City Of Kissimmee for all positions. The form is not job specific and evaluates the employee on a given set of standards. KFD has also attached the employee's annual merit increase to how they score on the appraisal. KFD has taken the initiative to conduct comprehensive training at all levels on what the purpose and expectations are from the employee performance evaluation process. Chief Agnew states that KFD is presently revisiting the performance appraisal process to make needed changes.

The literature review has provided a possible new approach for completing the employee performance appraisal.

Multi-Source Assessment Approach (360- degree feedback) The 360-degree feedback assesses employee performance and development from several

points of view: peers, customers, supervisors, and those that work for the employee. The 360-degree appraisal system is primarily used in the private business sector but is gaining the attention of many in the public sector as well.

The 360-degree process claims to be beneficial by:

- It gives employees and teams a clear understanding of personal strengths and areas for development.

- Employees view feedback from multiple perspectives as fair, accurate, believable, and motivational.

- The flexibility of the process makes it meaningful for people at all levels- in union and nonunion environments with proven success in such disparate fields as health care, law, manufacturing, and military operations.

- 360-degree feedback enhances the effectiveness of diversity management, team-based work structures, TQM, and other broad initiatives (Edwards, Ewen, 1996).

The 360 degree feedback system does have drawbacks. The system requires a minimum of five evaluators thus creating a more bureaucratic process. The system is not only labor intensive but also not user friendly. Most organizations are looking for systems that the evaluator and "evaluatee" find easy to use and understand. Many employees, especially managerial employees, can possibly be uneasy letting their peers and subordinate's rate and evaluate them. The 360 degree feedback system requires extensive training and monitoring.

PROCEDURES

For years RCES has been in need of a process in which employees performance could be evaluated. The department had tried to develop and implement a process many years earlier, but abandoned the process due to its lack of support from both administration as well as the employees. Upon return from NFA, a meeting was conducted with fellow managers and senior staff to gain further insight as to what our expectations should be from this research project. An effective employee appraisal system needs to be designed to meet both the needs of the employee as well as the organization. Employee performance and growth was discussed in detail and it was agreed that this would be a valuable research project that would address a priority issue within the RCES organization.

After the problem statement was defined and then redefined, an extensive literature review was conducted. The Learning Resource Center at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) was contacted for all relevant and current material dealing with employee appraisal systems. Approximately thirty separate articles were sent to the researcher's home. This process took approximately two months to acquire the needed material from the NETC. Valencia Community College was contacted and pertinent material was acquired.   The Internet was utilized extensively to locate information dealing with the employee appraisals. The Internet resource provided a massive amount of material that had to be reviewed and reduced to meet the limits set for the research project. The majority of the Internet material acquired dealt with employee appraisal system in the private sector. The Osceola County Library System

was utilized for books, periodicals and magazines that had potential material that would be used in the literary review.

A secondary material search was conducted to find what procedures local fire departments were using. The below listed Fire Departments were contacted to acquire copies of their Procedures that deal with employee appraisal systems. In the process of acquiring the needed procedures, informal interviews were held with various officers to inquire about what their department thought of their systems that were in place. The Fire Departments contacted were: Kissimmee Fire Department (KFD), St.Cloud Fire Department (SCFD), Orlando Fire Department (OFD), Orange County Fire Rescue (OCFR), Osceola County Fire Department (OCFD). Walt Disney World Company (WDW). WDW is the major taxpayer for the area covered by RCES. WDW was contacted for material on how the private sector conducts employee appraisal systems. On the initial literature research it was found that there was limited material concerning the public sector employee evaluation systems. Private sector information was still considered because there was many similarities found between private and public sector procedures.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this applied research project was to review, compare, and evaluate relevant material concerning employee appraisal systems used by other emergency service agencies with the intent of making a recommendation to design and develop an employee appraisal system for use at RCES.

This applied research project utilized an action and evaluative research methodology. The research questions to be answered were:

1. What types of performance appraisal systems are being utilized agencies within the emergency service industry?

2. How effective are these performance appraisal systems in evaluating and motivating the employee?

3. What key elements are required for an employee appraisal system to be effective?

4. What type of employee appraisal system should be used to evaluate and motivate the employees of RCES?

The desired outcome of this research was to determine what type of employee appraisal system would best suit the needs of the RCES and its employees. This applied research project will be utilized to make recommendations to the senior staff of RCES for the design and implementation of an employee evaluation system.

Limitations

The limitations of this research project are that focus was given primarily to emergency response related organizations. One private sector company was contacted which was Walt Disney World Company.

In the area of literature review, most of the available pertinent material dealt with private sector organizations.

None of the Emergency Service Organizations contacted thought that they had the best system in place. Everyone contacted thought their Employee Appraisal System could be improved and wanted to know how to do this. Most questions that were asked of these organizations did not have definitive answers but generated additional thoughts and questions.

Definition of Terms

- Big Picture   How the employee sees themselves within the entire organization. Where they are in rank as well as their particular role that they play in accomplishing organizational goals and objectives

- NETC   National Emergency Training Center

- NFA   National Fire Academy

- PDP   Personal Development Plan

- RCES   Reedy Creek Emergency Service

- RCID   Reedy Creek Improvement District

- WDW   Walt Disney World Company

RESULTS

The literature review, interviews and other data collected, indicated that the use of employee evaluations to measure employee performance is vital to the organization. As a manager of employees, much time is spent on coaching, and counseling employees to meet the goals and objectives set by the organization. If the coaching and counseling is effective, the employee's performance improves. When the employee's performance improves, the organization's performance improves. The key to improving the employee's performance is keeping it improving. This is a major challenge in today's work place. Much of the literature reviewed indicated many different ideas on how to meet the performance challenge.

Research question #1   What types of employee performance appraisal systems are being utilized with the emergency service industry?

The literature review found that there are two basic types of employee evaluation rating systems presently being used. **Management by Objectives (MBO)** MBO focuses more on task than it does on the behavior of the subordinate. It relies on goal setting for the organization as a whole, each department, and each manager, within the department, and each employee. It does not measure employee behavior, but it does measure each employee's contribution to the organization (Wood, 7) **Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS)** BARS is a variation of simple rating scales which clearly state the objectives to be rated in behavioral terms and uses critical incidents to explain various levels of performance. A rating form used to score the performance lists a series of statements that describe the job-related behavior. The evaluator simply checks off the appropriate statement that most fits the behavior performance. Most statements begin with the response categories, such as; always, very often, fairly often, occasionally, and never. Critical incidents are brief narratives, by the supervisor, of the things an employee has accomplished as part of his/her job performance. A diary is required with this process. The focus is on the behavior and not the traits of the employee (Wood, 7).

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- The literature review has provided a possible new approach for completing the employee performance appraisal. There were no agencies that were found to be using this process. **Multi-Source Assessment Approach (360-degree feedback)** The 360- degree feedback assesses employee performance and development from several points of view: peers, customers, supervisors, and those that work for the employee.

The 360 degree feedback system does have drawbacks. The system requires a minimum of five evaluators thus creating a more bureaucratic process. The system is not only labor intensive but also not user friendly. Most organizations are looking for systems that the evaluator and evaluatee find easy to use and understand. Many employees, especially managerial employees will be uneasy letting their peers and subordinate's rate and evaluate them. The 360 degree feedback system requires extensive training and monitoring.

Research question #2   How effective are these performance appraisal systems in evaluating and motivating the employee? This literature review found the BARS method to be the most common used. The BARS system is easy to use and understand by both the evaluator and the evaluatee. The BARS system is usually a check-off form with a listing of competencies and their weighted value. The employee can gain a clear perspective of what is expected and what changes are needed if any. The literature review found that most organizations have found a need to include the use of a Personal Development Plan (PDP) attached to the evaluation system.

Chief Sam Jackson of Osceola County Fire Rescue (OCFR) states that they have found success with the BARS system. Chief Jackson went on to state that the employee's performance depends on effective feedback. This statement was reinforced throughout all interviews as well as the literature review. The literature review indicated that the effectiveness of any employee appraisal system focuses on "buy-in". If either management or the employee do not "buy-in" on the importance and relevance of the process, the process is doomed. Chief Jackson states that he feels that OCFR employee appraisal system is good, but it could be improved. "It would be great if there

was no money tied to the evaluations. Then we could truly rate our employees more honestly and fairly without feeling that we have to give some type of money."

Few emergency service departments utilized a MBO type of system. MBO focuses more on task than it does on the behavior of the subordinate. It relies on goal setting for the organization as a whole, each department, and each manager, within the department, and each employee. It does not measure employee behavior, but does measure each employee's contribution to the organization (Wood), There was no emergency service organizations that were found to be using a 360-degree Multi Source Approach. The 360-degree approach is catching on quickly in the private sector, but it is expensive to run and maintain.

Research question #3   What key elements are required for an employee appraisal program to be successful? Most departments have taken a basic system and then customized it to meet their specific needs.   Many organizations have customized their form to include a section for areas of personal development. It is in this area that the rater and the employee discuss weaknesses and strengths and establish goals for improvement.

Some key elements to be considered are:

- **Specific**   Always be specific. Be specific when you give the employee feedback. Use examples and concentrate on creating an improvement.

- **Relevant**   Make sure that the item being discussed is relevant. Relevance is determined by answering the question: "What factors really make the difference between success and failure on a particular job function?"

- **Effective**   Is the performance appraisal system effective? Does the program point distinguish between good performers and poor performers?

- **Reliable**   Is the performance appraisal system reliable? Is the outcome consistent with whomever conducts the evaluation given the same data? Evaluators score should be very close when scoring the same employee.

- **Acceptable**   Is the performance appraisal system accepted by both management as well as the employee? Both parties must accept the system to give it validity.

- **Practical**   The performance appraisal form must be user friendly for both the evaluator and the employee.

The literature review did indicate that there are common appraisal errors.

- Inadequately defined standards of performance.

- Over emphasis on recent performance.

- Reliance on a gut feeling.

- Miscomprehension of performance standards by the employee.

- Insufficient or unclear performance documentation.

- Inadequate time allotment for the discussion.

- Too much talking by the manager/supervisor.

- Lack of a follow-up plan. (Swan .1998)

Research question #4   What type of employee appraisal system should be used to evaluate and motivate the employees of RCES? The BARS system with a narrative section would best suit the needs of RCES. This system allows the employee

and the evaluator to give and receive feedback. It can be designed to encourage the employee to actively participate in where the organization is heading. It empowers the employee to be part of the answer. The BARS system can be designed to be job specific and task specific, which allows the employee to see where they are above average as well as below average in a specified area.

DISCUSSION

While at NETC, I had the opportunity to discuss openly the challenges that my particular organization has. After only a few moments, I quickly realized that our particular organizational challenges are not unique. The challenge of how to properly design and implement an employee appraisal system is nation wide in the emergency service industry.

The data recovered in the literary review was an eye opening experience as to how complex the employee appraisal system is. All organizations, both private and public, have a need to properly cultivate and motivate the employees to be the best they can be.

After reviewing all the available data and pertinent information, it has become apparent that in order for RCES to enter the new Millennium, we need to focus more on our employee's performance needs. We have claimed in the past to be a progressive organization and we are now being called to task to "walk the walk" by designing an employee appraisal system that works.

The literature review information gathered indicated that everyone places, or should place, the employee appraisal system as a priority within their organization. Welch states, "Any company that's going to make it in the 1990s and beyond has got to find a way to engage the mind of every single employee. If you're not, thinking all the time about making every person more valuable, you don't have a chance. What's the alternative? Wasted minds? Uninvolved people? A labor force that's angry or bored? That doesn't make sense".

The employee is the backbone of the work force who meets the customer the most face to face. As managers, we are expected to mentor, cultivate and motivate our employees to provide excellent customer service. For many emergency service organizations across the nation, they are just now finding out how important excellent customer service is to their survival. At RCES we have the opportunity to witness Excellent Customer Service provided on a daily basis within the WDW organization. Many organizations realize that WDW is on the cutting edge of delivering excellent customer service. WDW schedules classes for other organizations so that customer service can be taught and brought back to their particular organization. Sure, WDW have their problems as well, but they never- and I mean never- take their eyes off customer service both to their employees as well as the paying customer. The survival of WDW hinges on their delivery of excellent customer service. We at RCES are finding that we have much that we can learn from WDW as well as other emergency service organizations.

What I have found through completing this research project is that we need to not only focus on the external customer service but that we need to stay focused on the

internal customer service as well. Our employees are our internal customers and our most expensive and valuable asset. All employees, both managerial and staff, need feedback. We need to all see our particular place in the big picture and what we need to do to be able to move within this picture. If every employee knows what is expected of themselves clearly, the employee has a plan. It was interesting to read about the different types of personal development plans (PDP) that are a vital part of the employee appraisal system. Every employee appraisal system needs a PDP. This is how the employee can improve their individual performance, which would elevate the organizational performance.

Presently, at RCES, we have shift employees who are discouraged, angry and frustrated. A major reason for this is that they have no feedback or a "plan" as to where to go next. By using the gathered research data and properly designing an employee appraisal system for RCES, the employees will become part of the answer. We will all be able to reap the benefits and rewards of delivering excellent customer service to the external customer as well as internal customer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A performance appraisal system needs to be developed for RCES so that the employees' performance and growth can be properly managed. The system needs to be one that is user friendly and non-intimidating. It should be less time consuming, cumbersome, and difficult to administer than those used in the past. The system should be designed to minimize biases that are always present in any appraisal system. A committee of officers and line personnel should be formed to develop a new appraisal system. This committee formation is vital so that the employee can have co-authorship into the system's design. The system must be designed to focus on empowering the employee to meet and exceed all expectations. The system must allow management to track, evaluate and improve and motivate poor performers as well as reward the above average performers. After the development is complete, and before the implementation of the new system, there must be significant training for all personnel. All personnel need to see and understand what will be expected of them and how the employee evaluation system effects them and the organization. This is essential for them to "buy-in" into the new system. The officers need to be trained on what will be expected of them as well. They will need to be trained how to utilize the new system, how to effectively evaluate their personnel, and how to effectively guide their personnel to reach their maximum potential. Senior management should be trained in the importance of rewarding the outstanding employee and providing the appropriate support when one of the Company/Line officers recommends that a behavior change is needed in one of their subordinates.

The proper implementation of the new employee appraisal system should lead to a greater understanding as to what is expected from each and every employee. If the officers are managing/mentoring their personnel correctly, the evaluation system should provide numerous benefits. This ultimately will lead to better customer service to both the internal and external customer through a more cohesive and productive work force. Those employees who are rated outstanding will receive the rewards that they richly deserve, and the below average employees will either be elevated up to an acceptable level or be removed from the organization.

The recommendations of the applied research project include, (a) RCES design and implement an employee appraisal system that would be of benefit to the organization as a whole as well as to the employee. (b) The system design should be user friendly and effective and not be time consuming or cumbersome. (c) It is recommended that the employee's play a major role in the design and development of the employee appraisal system.   Employees and management should work together to set attainable goals and set level of standards to be met. The key requirements to be included are: relevancy, effectiveness, reliability, acceptability and practicality (d) Training is the cornerstone to an effective employee appraisal system. Training will be provided to all personnel so that the purpose and method of the new system is fully understood. (e) A periodic review should be conducted to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the new RCES employee appraisal system.

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Appendices Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at http://www.lrc.fema.gov/ to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.